

Alaska Community Forestry Program

Accomplishment Report ~ Federal Fiscal Year '05 (October 2004 – September 2005)

The mission of the Alaska Community Forestry Program is to help communities build effective, self-sustaining community forestry programs with strong local support.

Overview

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry delivers the Community Forestry Program in Alaska through a partnership with the USDA Forest Service. In 2004, the Forest Service provided \$200,000 and the state contributed \$82,961 in state funds and in-kind services. The state leveraged \$53,002 in local cash and in-kind matches through grants to communities. Communities, businesses, and nonprofits contributed an additional \$77,311 in funds and services on other projects. The state contributed or leveraged a total of \$213,274.

Facts & Figures

- There are six Tree Cities USA (Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Fort Richardson, Wasilla, and Sitka).
- The three largest electric utilities in the state (Chugach, Golden Valley, and Matanuska) are Tree Lines USA.
- There are 30 certified arborists in the state, a record high number.
- Volunteers donated 2,479 hours on community forestry projects in Alaska this year.

2005 Grants

Alaska Boreal Forest Council, Fairbanks Arbor Day	\$1,000
Homer Soil & Water Conservation District Arbor Day	\$760
Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership Arbor Day	\$1,200
City of Wasilla Arbor Day	\$1,000
City of Wasilla Program Development	\$2,000

2004-2005 Grants (ongoing)

Fairbanks North Star Borough program development	\$25,000
Homer Soil & Water Conservation District Demonstration Forest Mgmt. Plan	\$7,520
City and Borough of Sitka program development	\$20,000
Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership inventory update and enter in GIS	\$5,000
Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership legacy tree program	\$1,300

State Activities

Training. The CF Program provided training for 302 people for a total of 1,096 seat hours. Most of the people trained were employees or volunteers engaged in managing public trees. This included employees of UAA, UAF, the Department of Transportation, and municipal parks and planning departments; and foresters, arborists and landscape architects in private practice.

Fifty-one municipal, state, and university employees in Anchorage and Fairbanks attended urban forest management classes. Participants learned how appropriate tree selection, planting, and maintenance makes better use of public funds and results in healthier, safer, and more attractive trees and forests in communities.

Twenty-one people attended a Community Tree Steward Course in Homer. The course covered tree biology, insect and disease pest, problem diagnosis, and hands-on pruning and tree planting.

Other training included pruning classes in Anchorage and Fairbanks, training for Anchorage Parks Department staff, and classes for Master Gardeners in Anchorage and Juneau.

Municipal Forestry. The Fairbanks North Star Borough completed an inventory of trees in its 47 parks. The borough can now create GIS maps of the parks and over 2,000 trees and 800 forested acres using Arc View software and has a GIS database of tree species, condition, size, and maintenance needs. The borough developed a management plan, established an advisory council, and printed a booklet for the public on its community forestry program and appropriate selection planting, and maintenance of trees.

The City of Wasilla secured a community forestry grant to buy a GPS for its tree inventory, provide training to city employees, and reprint a guidebook on tree selection, planting, and maintenance for the public and employees.

The chair of the state's Community Forest Council was hired as the Anchorage Parks Superintendent in August and now oversees municipal landscaping, horticulture, and park planning. She is working with the state to provide staff training and implement proper arboriculture practices for public trees.

Citizen Advisory and Advocacy Organizations. The Fairbanks Arbor Day Committee received the first national urban forestry award given to an Alaskan organization. The Division of Forestry and the Community Forest Council funded the travel expenses for two members to accept the award. The National Arbor Day Foundation honored the 21-year-old organization at its national Arbor Day celebration in Nebraska City in May as a "program that best represents the spirit of the tree planters' holiday." The nation's most northerly Arbor Day group organizes tree plantings at schools, parks, public facilities, and Habitat for Humanity homes throughout the Fairbanks area each year. Four members have been on the committee since it planted its first tree in 1983. True to form, the group organized more than a dozen Arbor Day events again this year.

- Anchorage TREErific held its first public meetings, established officers and committees, and sponsored five public educational events and an Arbor Day tree planting.
- The Juneau Urban Forestry Partnership initiated a quarterly newsletter and a monthly Tree Tips article in the newspaper, secured a state grant to hold an Arbor Day tree planting, and maintained trees at several other sites. Members are helping the city update and improve its tree inventory and incorporate it into the city's GIS. It also secured a \$500 grant from Holland America.
- The Sitka Tree and Landscape Committee organized a planting at a school and maintenance events. Sitka also held its first Arbor Day Tree and Landscape Contest. The successful event received good media coverage and public support. Winners in four categories were awarded prizes donated by local garden centers.

Other Activities. Program staff continues to participate in the multi-agency Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management, which provides information to the public and land managers and holds weed-pulling events.

- Staff and volunteers assisted the Anchorage Waterways Council in stream bank restoration on Chester Creek.
- The program helped the Nordic Ski Club acquire 1,000 spruce and birch seedlings to reforest parklands impacted by the spruce bark beetle in Anchorage.
- The CF program donated five reference books to public libraries in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Sitka, and Wasilla so local volunteers, arborists, and tree care professionals will have access to good urban forestry and arboriculture information.
- Patricia Joyner was hired as Program Coordinator in August and will fill a second staff position early in 2006.

State Assistance Results in Local Program Development

Sitka. The state first provided assistance to Sitka, a town of 8,800, in 1998. A \$1,500 grant funded an Arbor Day planting at a school. In 2001, a \$1,850 grant to the city funded a larger Arbor Day planting downtown. This project built interest that led to a \$15,000 Program Development Grant in 2001 for

completing an inventory of public trees and a management plan. The City Council appointed a Tree and Landscaping Committee to hold public meetings to prioritize landscape and tree planting projects and to advise the city.

The committee has remained very committed and helped the city achieve Tree City USA status in 2003 and 2004. In 2004 the state provided training on tree planting and care for city parks staff and volunteers. A \$5,000 grant in 2004-05 is funding the two highest priority tree plantings, development of a Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place brochure, and a community beautification contest with an emphasis on tree planting.

Homer. Homer, population 3,900, received a community forestry grant in 1998 that funded an inventory of public trees, a management plan, and removal of spruce trees that had been killed by bark beetles. The city council also passed a resolution establishing a community forestry program and a citizen advisory council; however advisory members were not named.

In 2004, Homer's interest in community forestry was again sparked due to a grant awarded to the Homer Soil & Water Conservation District (HS&WCF) to update and expand the Homer Demonstration Forest (HDF) management plan and to develop an interpretive brochure for a recently constructed nature trail. CF staff meetings with the HS&WCD and volunteers led to an Arbor Day Grant in 2005. The grant funded a series of Arbor Week events including an informational booth and planting demonstrations at a community park fair, a seedling give-away, and tours of a local orchard and the HDF nature trail.

Following the Arbor Day events, volunteers met with the city council to discuss the 1998 Community Forestry Resolution and ask that it be implemented. Their efforts were rewarded when the Homer City Council supported the resolution and appointed five members to advisory council.

In September the CF Program sponsored a Community Tree Steward class, attended by 21 people who will volunteer on community forestry projects in the coming year. Three Tree Stewards are also members of the city's newly created urban forestry advisory council. In 2006 Homer will finish the HDF management plan and interpretive brochure and work with the city council and city employees to decide how they can best help manage community forest resources.

Coming in 2006

The big community forestry event in 2006 will be the Pacific Northwest Community Trees Conference to be held in Anchorage on May 18-19. The conference is held every other year and is cosponsored by the Community Forestry Programs and advisory councils in Alaska, Washington, and Oregon, and the PNW Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. Watch for details early next year.